

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**NATION ASSISTANCE: A TOOL FOR PROMOTING
PEACETIME ENGAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA**

BY

**COLONEL ROBERT G. DINICK
United States Army**

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By

Colonel R. Gary Dinsick
United States Army

Dr. Robin Dorff
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Robert Gary Dinsick, COL, EN

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Nation assistance was instrumental in developing and preparing the battlefield for a United States foreign policy in Latin America during the 20th century. Perhaps this resource intensive tool is no longer effective or needed in promoting the peacetime engagement tenet of the Clinton Administration's National Security Strategy.

This paper demonstrates that nation assistance could be the most viable and productive vehicle that the DoD has in Latin America to influence political, economic and military environments in the young democracies of Latin America.

This study reviews the past successes of this program, the future threats to Latin America and our national interests, and recommends to the Administration and Congress, from three options, that the government put more resources into this cost-effective plank of the foreign security policy of our nation in the fertile but fragile democracies of Latin America.

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Introduction

Peacetime engagement and enlargement are prime tenets of the strategic objectives or ends of the Clinton Administration's national security strategy titled A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (NSS), published in February 1995. Their ends are "to secure the benefits of peace and stability, and to promote economic growth and trade" within developing democracies.¹

In the supporting National Military Strategy of the United States of America (NMS), subsequently published in 1995, peacetime engagement is the component that addresses the concepts (ways) and resources (means) and "demonstrates commitment, improves collective military capabilities, promotes democratic ideals, relieves suffering, and ...enhances regional stability."²

However, following some further literature research, it appears that, with respect to Latin America, the ends-ways-means are not in balance. Specifically, the ends which are based on our stated national interests cannot be attained using the existing policy, programs, and the allocated resources.

Consequently, I will argue in this paper that insufficient nation assistance occurs, or is planned, in Latin America to prosecute successfully this peacetime engagement strategy. This imbalance in the strategy increases the risk of destabilizing Latin America, and its political systems regressing back to the dictatorships of the recent past. Finally, I will recommend a

policy option that redresses the imbalance between the ends-ways-means of the nation assistance policy in Latin American to mitigate the risk.

Background

Future Wars

Ralph Peters describes future conflicts as less structured than the World Wars and Cold War of the past. Conflicts will be asymmetrical, with a state or coalition of states as only one of the possible participants. This situation complicates the way the United States perceives war. We are geared to fight wars with "legal-basis(nation) states" not non-state threats such as criminal organizations, armed populations or rogue factions.³ Peters contends that future conflicts will result from the inability of nation-states to distribute and manage resources, critical to the economic growth of the population. The polarization of wealth will cause strife between different nations, different classes, and organizations. The fabric of societies will stretch beyond their strength and tear.⁴

From social-economic inequities, a new form of warfare will evolve in the urban areas of the underdeveloped nations of the world. Robert J. Bunker, in "Rethinking OOTW," states that, "The future killing grounds in the less-developed world will not be the impenetrable forests or the remote mountain areas where traditional guerrilla wars have been fought, but the crowded,

built-up areas in and around the less-developed world's burgeoning urban areas."⁵

Increasing global integration means the problems that fester in one Latin American city will proliferate and destabilize the whole region and possibly U.S. national interests.⁶ Could this be a prologue to future conflict in the teeming metropolises of Latin America, such as San Paolo, Buenos Aires, or Mexico City? If yes, then what policies should the United States be formulating and/or implementing to mitigate these future conflicts?

Threats To Our National Interests in Latin America

During the Cold War, identifying threats to our national interests was relatively easy. However, the fall of the Soviet Union and other repressive regimes, around the world, muddies the proverbial waters of our national security policy. Who and what are the enemies to the United States common defense and domestic tranquility?

The last few years have highlighted some of the probable threats that will challenge the United States and our allies in the Post-Cold War Era. Not since the Gulf War in 1990 have our forces been employed in a conventional way. U.S. servicepersons have provided humanitarian relief to the Kurds, fought the tribes of Somalia, saved the Rwandans and rebuilt their infrastructure, performed nation-building and democratization in Haiti, provided

numerous domestic disaster relief actions, and currently are enforcing a fragile peace in the Balkans. These are non-traditional military missions.

The latent, yet real, "chaotic" threat that exists across the spectrum of society proliferates religious-based groups like the Aum Shinrikyo.⁷ These 50,000 cultists are responsible for the recent use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) against civilians in the Tokyo subway.

Latin America remains fertile ground for the proliferation of these types of problems and threats. What are the forces that can cause regional instability, proliferate WMD, perpetrate transnational crimes and challenge order, reform and democracy in Latin America? Currently, there are three threat forces. They are "factional armies, large criminal organizations, and armed groups among a populace..."⁸ Let me briefly discuss each of these forces and cite some examples of the existing threats to our national interests.

Factional Armies

Factional armies are loosely organized, with common but complex motives and objectives. These homogeneous groups band together to overcome the social, economic, and values degradation threatened by other factions. Their objectives are security of the group, acquiring land, resources and prestige and the restoration of the traditional values system common to the group.⁹

To understand factional armies, you need only to read the morning news and understand that the U.S.-led NATO Balkans deployment is to enforce peace between three factional armies that have been fighting for a thousand years. These groups are ethnic and/or religious-based with hatreds that transcend logic and normal rules of warfare. A gruesome example is the recent documented ethnic-cleansing that occurred in the Balkans. The threat, according to President Clinton, is stopping these warring factions before their actions ignite another European land war.

This threat exists in our own regional backyard. In war-torn Guatemala, Mayan Indians constitute over 50 percent of Guatemala's seven million people. In the early 1980's, the military-led government conducted a campaign to eradicate the Mayas because they believed the Indians supported the ongoing insurgent movement. The Guatemalan Army destroyed 400 villages, killed approximately 80,000 Indians, and forced at least 70,000 refugees to leave the country.¹⁰

Factional armies exist today in Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, Columbia, El Salvador, and Haiti. Ethnic violence and counter-violence along with terrorism are common. These situations have the potential to destabilize the region and threaten our national interests.

Criminal Organizations

A second threat in Latin America is by large organized criminal organizations that threaten our peacetime engagement and

democratization policies of our National Security Strategy.¹¹ The common objective of the groups is to generate profits from illegal activities over a transnational spectrum.

Large organizations like the Cali Drug Cartel in Colombia operate with impunity across international boundaries. Their organizations are well-armed and well-trained in sophisticated munitions, airplanes, boats, intelligence networks and state-of-the-art communications gear. Also, they are well-financed, politically connected, tactically ruthless and motivated by greed. The Cali Cartel's damage to the youth of the United States is greater than that of any war or natural disaster in our history. Even with increased focus by our nation on this threat, there has been little effect on the available supply of drugs into our country. Our country's future is dependent on our ability to deal with this threat.

Well-armed, organized and violent street gangs like the California-based Crips and Bloods and the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang, have branched out into narco-trafficking, extortion, prostitution, and legitimate businesses and represent the distribution network and business partners of other criminal organizations based in Latin America. Other world-wide criminal organizations that could find Latin America fertile ground to exploit are: the Aum Shinrikyo Sect with its demonstrated WMD capability, Russian/Eastern European gangs, Oriental Tongs, and Central/South American gangs with their drugs, money laundering operations and threats of violence. These organized criminal

gangs affect our national interests by contributing to regional instability and transnational dangers, and by degrading democratization efforts throughout the world.

Armed Population

The third threat to U.S. national interests in Latin America is by armed groups within the population.¹² The conditions that seem to support this criminal activity are: subversion, lawlessness, poverty, and loss of traditional moral values.

Armed groups of people are common in and destructive to societal infrastructures in emerging democracies. Colombia, for example, has experienced over 1,000 deaths attributed to lawlessness of the general population in the last three years.¹³ Another example is the recent savage border war between historic rivals Peru and Ecuador which recently led to over 500 casualties. The issue is land that has been in dispute since colonial Spanish days.¹⁴

Following natural disasters such as the earthquakes in our hemisphere, hurricanes in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and uncontrolled migration from Cuba and Haiti, martial law was imposed to abate the looting, lawlessness and destruction that grew out of these events. The power of these armed citizens cannot be overlooked.

Changes In Latin America

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has made a

sea-change in foreign policy toward Latin America. No longer are we supporting our friends in their fight against communists as they attacked democracy throughout Latin America. We are watching thirty-four fledgling and young democracies grow and mature. In fact, the only remaining bastion of communism is Castro-led Cuba. How can the United States continue to maintain and cultivate the momentum of this democratic fervor?

Since the end of the Cold War, we have observed the isolation and continual disintegration of communist Cuba, peace in war-torn Nicaragua and El Salvador, guerrilla warfare that is indigenous not imported, and economic maturity in selected developed areas in Central and South America. There appears to be a new environment and opportunity for regional and cooperative security within the hemisphere.¹⁵

During the past century, the U.S. was in strategic denial of the value of direct involvement in Latin America and its economic development. Except for Cuba in the early 1960's, the Monroe Doctrine kept foreign powers from involving themselves in Latin America. Usually, this was to the detriment of Latin American development.

What should the United States' policy approach toward Latin America be? Should we be proactive or reactive toward our southern neighbors? Cooperative security, especially with Latin America, must be our focus. U.S. administrations must focus on three areas: strengthening the democratic institutions and infrastructure through dynamic assistance programs; continuing to

integrate the economies of the hemisphere with free trade pacts and agreements; and, encouraging the rule of law and the sanctity of human rights through judicial review.¹⁶

Nation Assistance

The world has changed dramatically in the last five years. Our recent experience shows that stability of the young and developing countries depends on capabilities other than military power. Stability results from having governments able to protect the population, cultivate market economies, and build and sustain adequate infrastructure in the country.¹⁷

With fewer forces stationed abroad, a prime Department of Defense tool used to combat these threats and keep the U.S. engaged world-wide is nation assistance. Nation assistance is defined as military assistance provided to another sovereign nation in their territory based on mutual treaties or pacts during either peacetime or wartime. This assistance promotes long-term regional stability by assisting receiver nations in experiencing sustained growth and development of institutions and infrastructure.¹⁸

The Department of Defense's (DoD) nation assistance programs support the host nation's own development programs. Although they are DoD operations, nation assistance operations are coordinated by the U.S. Ambassador and the country team in the receiver country. These assistance programs include: security

assistance, foreign internal defense assistance, and humanitarian and civic assistance.¹⁹ These are military-military and military-civilian contact programs that effectively promote peacetime engagement and democratization and provide opportunities for support to foreign nations to prosecute the stated ends or objectives of our national security strategy. . In Latin America, these programs have many components. The work is accomplished under provisions of Title 10 of the United States Code which governs the existence and operations of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Our assistance efforts in Latin America during the 20th century have been sporadic, uncoordinated, and not always productive. From the early attempts at political and infrastructure reconstruction in Cuba between 1898-1906, Haiti between 1915-1934, Dominican Republic between 1916-1924, El Salvador from 1918- present, and Honduras 1983-present, the U.S. has experienced various degrees of success. However, the lack of consistent guidance from high-ranking officers, insufficient training for rebuilding sensitive political, economic, educational and social infrastructures, and the "make them like Americans" mentality contributed significantly to our marginal success.²⁰

Our servicepersons have been involved in sundry activities that support developing Latin American nations as they combat lawlessness, subversion, insurgency, and poverty. The NMS states that, "These efforts are carefully orchestrated to reinforce the

host nation's developmental programs." Events such as bilateral military exercises, civil-military operations, intelligence and communication exchanges, and logistics are the means by which we execute the nation assistance missions.²¹

Latin American Success Stories

Nation assistance remains a strong and effective tool to promote democracy in Central and South America. For the last two decades in Latin America, large civic action projects and medical readiness exercises have promoted stability in Latin America's young democracies and furthered the self confidence and well-being of these developing countries. For example, in 1993, the scope of the engineer civic action projects alone included school construction in seven countries, medical clinic construction in three countries, and road and bridge construction in three countries.²²

In 1994, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided to the Bolivians, at no cost, the planning and organizational skills to perform effective disaster assistance operations in their disaster-prone country. This is unique because this ex-dictatorship has never had civilian control of the military. The organization proposed by the Corps of Engineers stressed civilian control of the military relief operations. This was favorably received by the Bolivians.

Disaster relief operations in Latin America are true success stories. According to Major General Max Baratz, Chief, Army

Reserve, the U.S. Army Reserve specialized support structure and experience in numerous domestic disasters make them exceptionally well-suited to respond to disasters in this hemisphere.²³

A true success story and model for future nation assistance operations is the U.S. Army's 249th Engineer Battalion(Prime Power) headquartered at Ft. Belvoir, Va. This unit exists to support the Army's needs for reliable electric power and technical expertise on power generation systems. However, this unit is used effectively in nation assistance missions in promoting peacetime engagement in Latin America. During Fiscal Year 1995, the battalion has deployed and delivered prime electrical power all over Latin America. The unit completed over 100 missions at remote sites around the world. Here is a sample of the missions that the battalion completed last year.

Support to "Operation Uphold Democracy" in Haiti.

As U.S. forces peacefully entered Haiti in September, 1994, to restore democracy and order, Prime Power soldiers assessed the condition of the Port-au-Prince power plant and, using local operators, brought the plant back online. In addition, they worked with the government and assessed power needs in the poor, rural areas and developed plans to extend the power grid to villages currently without electricity. This will enable the Haitian government to develop the infrastructure in this impoverished land.

Support to "Operation Safe Haven" and Guantanamo

A State Department request initiated a support mission to SOUTHCOM to control the Haitian illegal migration problem. The unit performed maintenance on critical power generation equipment, provided technical assistance on power generation and electrical distribution systems, and upgraded existing systems to improve reliability and safety. These efforts improved the quality of life for the Haitians while the migration and resettlement problems were solved.

Support to Disaster Assistance

The battalion has a history of being the first unit deployed in support to natural disasters relief and humanitarian assistance. FY-95 was no exception. Hurricanes Luis and Marilyn blew into the Caribbean in September, wreaking havoc in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The battalion provided vital prime electrical power to the hospital on St. Thomas, performed damage assessments, and installed emergency generators at over 70 crucial sites.²⁴

Imbalance of Ends-Ways-Means

For our foreign policy toward Latin America, the ends-ways-means are not in balance. The imbalance of this fragile equation results from the abandonment of proven ways/concepts and the reduction of the means/resources to prosecute those

ways/concepts. Some of the concepts or ways, like nation assistance, are being reduced. As I previously stated, this imbalance in the strategy increases the risk of destabilizing Latin America and its political systems and their regression back to the past authoritarian regimes.

Nation assistance provides basic services to the poorer segments of the general population. Infrastructure improvement projects that enhance a developing country's ability to carry out basic public functions and provide essential services are the past successes of nation assistance efforts in Latin America.²⁵ The chance to promote democracy in Latin America remains paramount. However, these fragile democracies are always threatened by drug cartels, terrorists and unhappy militaries.²⁶

Since 1992, over 80,000 U.S. Army and Air Force National Guardsmen and reserves have deployed to Latin America to conduct humanitarian and civic action activities in support of our Central and South American neighbors. As with many other successful programs, the United States Southern Command in FY 1995 reduced future nation assistance exercises by 40 percent compared to 1994 levels. Resources are just not available to continue these successful and important initiatives. This downward trend in nation assistance and the eventual relocation of U.S. Southern Command from Panama to Miami, Florida, will send a message to our Central and South American friends that is contrary to the stated ends in the Clinton Administration's NSS.²⁷

DoD is the biggest stakeholder in nation assistance actions. Any actions that promote internal security and economic viability lesson the chance that the U.S. armed forces will be called to intervene. This resembles preventive medicine. With early use of the appropriate assistance(means) on healthy people, a later large expenditure of resources to correct a disease may be prevented.²⁸ However, some critics contend that U.S. troop involvement in the innerworkings of certain Latin American countries has adversely affected some cultures.

In 1993, United States servicepersons were sent into Guatemala to restore elements of the infrastructure destroyed by years of civil conflict. In a country afflicted by violent conflict and documented human-rights abuses, the planned civic action projects were perceived as supportive of the repressive policies of the Guatemalan Army. This policy was contrary to human rights precedents set by our government. Since perception by the people of the world is critical, the nation assistance program in Guatemala was curtailed, but the damage to our credibility was done. Temporary U.S. military presence, even in support of humanitarian missions, looked more like the "gringos" trying to maintain control and protect United States economic interests.²⁹ This example of ineptitude indicates that the balance of our ends-ways-means of our stated strategy needs adjustment.

Security Assistance

One of the most successful security assistance efforts by

the United States has been in Latin America. Although not as large as the security assistance program in the Middle East, the program is highly visible and extremely important in Latin American countries such as Honduras, Guatemala, Bolivia, El Salvador, and Colombia.³⁰ However, budget cuts have slashed this proven program to critical levels with no projected increases in the future. The Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP) through 1997 shows considerable reductions in foreign assistance both in the funding and manpower levels. Current budget dollars programmed for these missions represent less than two percent of the security assistance allocations and four percent of the authorized world-wide foreign military sales. The total cost of these programs is only a fraction of the U.S. national defense authorization and buys considerable strategic value for the region of the Americas.³¹ The program viability remains in question.

Our leaders must recognize that security assistance is a downpayment in prosecuting a successful foreign policy in Latin America. Security assistance allows us an in-road to the countries in the region. Like any negotiation, the U.S. must bring something to a country or we risk not being invited in or at least not being taken seriously. That something is a healthy nation assistance program.³² Having strong, stable and reliable friends throughout the Western Hemisphere who remain democratic can assist and share with the United States the defense of our freedom and collective security.³³

Policy Options and Risk

Political scientists and regional leaders continue to cry that Latin America has never been at the center of U.S. foreign and economic policies. Now that the Cold War is over, the time is right to move Latin America to the core of U.S. policy. Nation assistance can be the U.S. military's contribution to the peacetime engagement and development of our hemispheric neighbors.³⁴

With respect to our nation assistance policy in Central and South America, there remain three options. The first option is that the United States can remain uninvolved and accept the inherent risk. That risk of not resourcing the nation assistance ways of the peacetime engagement strategy will surface in Latin America as insecurity, slow economic development, and setbacks in democratization. Further downsizing of the nation assistance effort in Latin America would be detrimental to the peace enlargement ends of our NSS.

The second option is to maintain the nation assistance programs, especially those high pay-back humanitarian civic action programs, but not to fully fund and/or prolong their execution over a longer period. The advantages are that the ways remain in place and the planning processes for these unique projects continue for the U.S. and host nation governments involved. The disadvantages and inherent risk remain the same as

option one.

Finally, the third option, and the one recommended here, is to reinstate the program to 1994 levels immediately and slowly increase the program level in future years. The advantages are that the United States would send a signal that our focus is now on our southern neighbors, and that democratization and political and economic stability are truly the policy concerns of the United States. The main disadvantage is the additional resource drain on the DoD and Department of State budgets and invariably the burden on the U.S. taxpayer.

Nation Assistance: A Tool For The Future

An enhanced nation assistance program in Latin America has in the past and will in the future maintain regional security, increase national and economic security, and build international goodwill.³⁵ However, our ends of promoting democracy abroad through peacetime engagement and nation assistance must be consistent with our established policies and must be sufficiently resourced. "What a tragedy it would be if the pendulum were to swing back to dictatorship in Latin America" only because the United States forgot to pay attention to these fragile and developing democracies in Latin America.³⁶

The answer remains that if policies are put in place that guarantee democracy, then an environment of economic growth and human rights will prevail in Latin America. History shows us

that democracy and favorable economics will secure the peace better than any other policy.

The United States has the opportunity to devote the available resources of its military to support continued progress in Latin America. Like a military operation, the center of gravity should be attacked with the leadership, technical training, and the means (resources) that are available to this country. We can make progress on rebuilding and repairing national infrastructures which will help Latin American nations help themselves. This is a low cost but high payback operation.³⁷

Colombia provides a model of how this would work. The population of Colombia is approximately 36 million. Demographics show that 25 percent of the population are below 18 years of age and living at/or below poverty levels. This generation will grow up without the required minimum education and skills to compete in society. Consequently, they will gravitate toward the easy money offered by the insurgents and the drug industry. A viable nation assistance program would provide to this neglected niche of Colombian society the education, job skills, and jobs that would make the insurgents and the drug trade less attractive for the poor of Colombia and Latin America.³⁸

Along with the traditional nation assistance missions of medical and veterinary care, and construction and repair of transportation systems, public works operations, and sanitation facilities, there are other roles that DoD can conduct to promote

the National Security and Military Strategies. For example, it could increase training of Host Nation civilian professionals in critical engineering, management, health care, waste water treatment and environmental cleanup skills. Also, Civil Affairs Units can teach and/or promote anti-corruption and entrepreneurship through incentive-based measures.³⁹ Cooperation between DOD, regional states, USAID, existing NGOs and PVOs, and civilian governments and their militaries can collectively attack these challenges.

The U.S. nation assistance policy for Latin America into the next century should not be passive. Our civilian and military leaders should execute nation assistance with a "war-fighter mentality, using campaigns and major operations to achieve their strategic objectives. CINCs should fight for security (nation) assistance instead of managing it."⁴⁰ This focus will be sufficient to strengthen the functional liaisons between civilian governments, military leaders, business leaders, and the people of the Western Hemisphere. This "brotherhood of the Americas" could facilitate regional peace and act as a model to "secure democratic liberties and open-market economic success..." for a reasonable, cost-effective investment by the United States.⁴¹

Regional Burden Sharing

Training other nations to perform nation assistance may be a workable, cost-effective option. Should political and /or cultural problems preclude the United States' directly conducting

nation assistance operations, then a qualified, U.S. trained surrogate could perform the operations. A case in point might be the transition period following the inevitable change in government in Cuba. When Castro leaves and democracy begins to bloom in Cuba, the better solution to U.S. direct involvement in the process would be to work through a surrogate friendly to Cuba, such as Mexico.

The value of Non-Government Organizations (NGO) should not be discounted in the nation assistance process. NGOs, especially religious organizations, are active in tending to the physical and emotional needs of the poor of the Americas. However, they are limited in the infrastructure development projects that these young democracies need. In the past, organizations have built shelters, hospitals, and schools, and have drilled wells to bring some of the more remote areas of Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela into the 20th century. All this was done to promote the social works that these organizations do so well. Why not use U.S. soldiers, both Active and Reserve, to do the same work in cooperation with the host nation and NGOs to promote peacetime engagement and stabilization of the fledgling democracies?

The national interests of the United States will be supported by using all instruments of national power to attain the ends we share with our Latin American partners: economic development, democratization, regional security and mitigating transnational dangers such as terrorism, drugs, and illegal

immigration. Serious economic and social problems remain in Latin America that could be overcome by a minimal investment in nation assistance. A minimal investment will bear long-term fruit for the United States and the world.⁴²

Civil-Military Relations

A strong civil-military relationship is critical in these maturing democracies. The elected leadership, military, and population must be eternally vigilant of "populist demagogues who exploit discontent with social and economic conditions and narco-traffickers who use drug money and terror to subvert institutions."⁴³ The civil-military link is key and must be strengthened.

However, pockets of resentment still exist in Latin America where military officers don't view themselves as subordinate to civilian control. In fact, only four countries have militaries fully subordinate to civilian rule. This situation can destabilize these developing states.⁴⁴ The continual contacts between the U.S. and Latin American militaries through established nation assistance programs will continue to promote the U.S. principle of military subservience to elected civilian leadership. This remains a relatively new concept in certain countries in Latin America.⁴⁵

Historically, the Latin American armies are strong advocates of low-cost civic action programs in the Americas that continue to improve quality of life for the countries. However, much was

done in conjunction with established U.S. programs.⁴⁶ Throughout the hemisphere, the U.S. military remains highly regarded as both professional and effective. Our military-to-military engagements continue to play a key role in advancing our overall strategic agenda of peacetime engagement and democratization in Latin America.

Our policy needs tools like nation assistance that act as confidence-building measures that promote our strategy. Combined exercises, joint training programs, security assistance, professional military and civilian education, humanitarian relief and civic action programs, and arms transfer policies are effective tools to cement relations between countries in our hemisphere. These low-cost, low profile measures are critical in mitigating future conflict in Latin America and promoting democracy and economic development.⁴⁷

The adverse effects of not supporting our southern friends could be catastrophic. Our strategic interests would be weakened. Both investment and trade with one of our largest trading blocs would be in jeopardy with opportunity costs and real losses to U.S. businesses. The counter-drug operations would be disrupted. Humanitarian crises like uncontrolled migration of people would tax areas of the region. Finally, support for global peace and cooperative security would falter.⁴⁸ At that point only direct involvement by U.S. combat troops would stop an increase in internal conflicts, border disputes, drug trafficking, and terrorism throughout the Americas.⁴⁹

Conclusion

What does this all mean with respect to threats to the common defense and domestic tranquility of the United States of America? Factional armies, criminal organizations, and an armed population represent real threats that affect our ability to promote democracy abroad, destabilize the region and truly threaten our stated national interests. Nation Assistance is a key and effective weapon in our arsenal of national power to combat these threats. Only an environment of economic development and personal security will allow the maturing democracies of Latin America to maximize their potential and ensure regional stability. The planned nation assistance program reductions in 1996 and the future must not occur.

While addressing the Summit of the Americas, President Clinton said, "We are bound together by geography, by history, by culture, but most important, now by shared values-a ferocious devotion to freedom, democracy, social justice and determination to improve the lives of our people."⁵⁰ Only the lack of political will and foresight, not a lack of practical options, prevents action. Americans want to avoid direct military involvement in Latin American land wars and this is a course that may eliminate any future regional conflicts.

Efforts to support fully our vital national interests can be leveraged by an effective nation assistance program. We can achieve those mutual regional objectives of economic growth,

democratic government, regional security and control of transnational dangers such as terrorism, drug trafficking and the migration of people. With congressional help, the Defense Department can do its portion of this necessary mission.⁵¹ Let us put the necessary resources behind this tool called nation assistance to attain our stated ends.

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